

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1                   1. A method of monitoring input light having a plurality of spectral bands,  
2   the method comprising:  
3                   during a first time interval,  
4                   separating a first spectral band of the plurality of spectral bands  
5                   from the plurality of spectral bands,  
6                   directing the first spectral band to a photodetector while preventing  
7                   the spectral bands in the plurality of spectral bands other than the first spectral  
8                   band from reaching the photodetector, and  
9                   generating, with a wavelength-monitoring circuit that is coupled to  
10                  the photodetector, a first signal representing a quality characteristic of a  
11                  modulated or unmodulated pattern of light in the first spectral band; and  
12                  thereafter, during a second time interval,  
13                  separating a second spectral band of the plurality of spectral bands  
14                  from the plurality of spectral bands,  
15                  directing the second spectral band to the photodetector while  
16                  preventing spectral bands in the plurality of spectral bands other than the second  
17                  spectral band from reaching the photodetector, and  
18                  generating, with the wavelength-monitoring circuit, a second signal  
19                  representing a quality characteristic of a modulated or unmodulated pattern of  
20                  light in the second spectral band.

1                   2. The method of claim 1, and further comprising, during the first time  
2   interval, generating a first power signal representing combined optical power of the  
3   spectral bands other than the first spectral band.

1                   3. The method of claim 1, and further comprising:  
2                   during subsequent successive time intervals,  
3                   separating each spectral band of the plurality of spectral bands  
4                   from the plurality of spectral bands,  
5                   directing the separated spectral band to the photodetector while  
6                   preventing the spectral bands other than the separated spectral band from reaching  
7                   the photodetector, and

8 generating, with the wavelength-monitoring circuit, a signal representing a  
9 quality characteristic of a modulated or unmodulated pattern of light in the separated  
10 spectral band.

1 4. The method of claim 1, wherein the first and second signals represent,  
2 for the first and second spectral bands, one or more of signal-to-noise ratio, bit error rate,  
3 optical power level, and optical wavelength center frequency.

1 5. The method of claim 1, wherein:  
2 the modulation pattern implements SONET STS-1 frames; and  
3 the first and second signals represent specific bytes in the SONET frames.

1 6. Apparatus for monitoring input light having a plurality of spectral  
2 bands, the apparatus comprising:  
3 an optical train that intercepts the input light and provides optical paths for  
4 routing the spectral bands;  
5 a photodetector;  
6 a routing mechanism that operates to direct selected spectral bands to said  
7 photodetector;  
8 an electrical circuit coupled to said photodetector to provide a signal  
9 representing a quality characteristic of a modulated or unmodulated pattern of light  
10 impinging on said photodetector; and  
11 a control circuit coupled to said routing mechanism to cause different  
12 selected spectral bands to said photodetector, whereby said electrical circuit provides  
13 signals representing the quality characteristic for the different selected spectral bands.

1 7. The apparatus of claim 6, wherein said electrical circuit provides a  
2 signal representing, for each selected spectral band, one or more of signal-to-noise ratio,  
3 bit error rate, optical power level, and optical wavelength center frequency.

1 8. The apparatus of claim 6, wherein:  
2 said modulation pattern implements SONET STS-1 frames; and  
3 said electrical circuit provides a signal representing specific bytes in the  
4 SONET frames.

1 9. The apparatus of claim 6, wherein

2           said control circuit sequentially causes said routing mechanism to select  
3 each of the plurality of spectral bands so that the plurality of spectral bands are  
4 sequentially communicated to said photodetector in a round-robin fashion.

1           10. The apparatus of claim 6, wherein:

2           said routing mechanism includes a plurality of dynamically configurable  
3 routing elements corresponding to the plurality of spectral bands, each routing element  
4 having first and second states, said first state causing that routing element to direct its  
5 respective spectral band to said photodetector, said second state causing that routing  
6 element to direct its respective spectral band so as not to reach said photodetector; and

7           said control circuit sequentially selects each routing element in a desired  
8 subset of the plurality of routing elements so that the corresponding subset of spectral  
9 bands are sequentially communicated to said photodetector in a round-robin fashion,  
10 whereupon the spectral bands in said subset of spectral bands are monitored for quality by  
11 said electrical circuit and spectral bands not in said subset are not monitored for quality  
12 by said electrical circuit.

1           11. The apparatus of claim 10, wherein:

2           said second state of each of said routing elements causes that routing  
3 element to direct its respective spectral band to a common location.

1           12. The apparatus of claim 11, and further comprising an additional  
2 photodetector that generates a signal representing optical power of light impinging on  
3 said common location.

1           13. The apparatus of claim 6, wherein said optical train includes a  
2 dispersive element.

1           14. The apparatus of claim 10, wherein at least one of said dynamically  
2 configurable elements is a rooftop prism whose position can be changed to define said  
3 first and second states.

1           15. The apparatus of claim 10, wherein at least one of said dynamically  
2 configurable elements includes a mirror whose orientation can be changed to define said  
3 first and second states.

1                   16. The apparatus of claim 12, further comprising an additional electrical  
2 circuit that is connected to said additional photodetector and computes the total optical  
3 power incident on said additional photodetector and sets a threshold for triggering a fault  
4 condition if said optical power falls below said threshold.

1                   17. The apparatus of claim 6, incorporated into a system that further  
2 includes:  
3                   a coupler that directs a fraction of light traveling on a fiber to be monitored  
4 to said optical train; and  
5                   a management processor that receives information based on said signal  
6 representing a quality characteristic.

1                   18. Apparatus for monitoring at least one characteristic of input light  
2 having a plurality of spectral bands, the apparatus comprising:  
3                   an optical train that intercepts the input light and provides optical paths for  
4 routing the spectral bands;  
5                   first and second photodetectors;  
6                   a plurality of dynamically configurable routing elements corresponding to  
7 the plurality of spectral bands, each routing element having first and second states, said  
8 first state causing that routing element to direct its respective spectral band to said first  
9 photodetector, said second state causing that routing element to direct its respective  
10 spectral band to said second photodetector;  
11                   a first electrical circuit coupled to said first photodetector to provide a  
12 signal representing a quality characteristic of a modulated or unmodulated pattern of light  
13 impinging on said first photodetector;  
14                   a second electrical circuit coupled to said second photodetector to provide  
15 a signal representing optical power of light impinging on said second photodetector; and  
16                   a control circuit coupled to said routing elements to cause different  
17 selected ones of said routing elements to assume said first state while causing the  
18 remaining routing elements to assume said second state.

1                   19. The apparatus of claim 18, wherein said first electrical circuit provides  
2 a signal representing, for each selected spectral band, one or more of signal-to-noise ratio,  
3 bit error rate, optical power level, and optical wavelength center frequency.

1           20. The apparatus of claim 18, wherein said control circuit sequentially  
2 selects each routing element in the plurality of routing elements so that the plurality of  
3 spectral bands are sequentially communicated to said first photodetector in a round-robin  
4 fashion.

1           21. The apparatus of claim 18, wherein said control circuit sequentially  
2 selects each routing element in a desired subset of the plurality of routing elements so that  
3 the corresponding subset of spectral bands are sequentially communicated to said first  
4 photodetector in a round-robin fashion, whereupon said subset of spectral bands are  
5 monitored for quality by said first electrical circuit and spectral bands not in said subset  
6 are not monitored for quality by said first electrical circuit.

1           22. The apparatus of claim 18, wherein said first photodetector is a PIN  
2 photodiode or an avalanche photodiode.

1           23. The apparatus of claim 18, wherein said optical train includes a  
2 dispersive element.

1           24. The apparatus of claim 18, wherein at least one of said dynamically  
2 configurable elements is a rooftop prism whose position can be changed to define said  
3 first and second states.

1           25. The apparatus of claim 18, wherein each of said dynamically  
2 configurable elements includes a mirror whose orientation can be changed to define said  
3 first and second states.

1           26. The apparatus of claim 18, wherein said second electrical circuit  
2 connected to said second photodetector computes the total optical power incident on said  
3 photodetector and sets a threshold for triggering a fault condition if said optical power  
4 falls below said threshold.

1           27. The apparatus of claim 20, in a system that further includes:  
2 a coupler that directs a fraction of light traveling on a fiber to be monitored  
3 to said optical train; and  
4 a management processor that receives information based on said signal  
5 representing a quality characteristic.